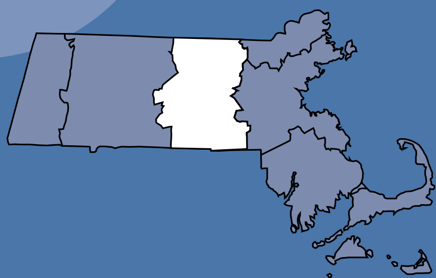
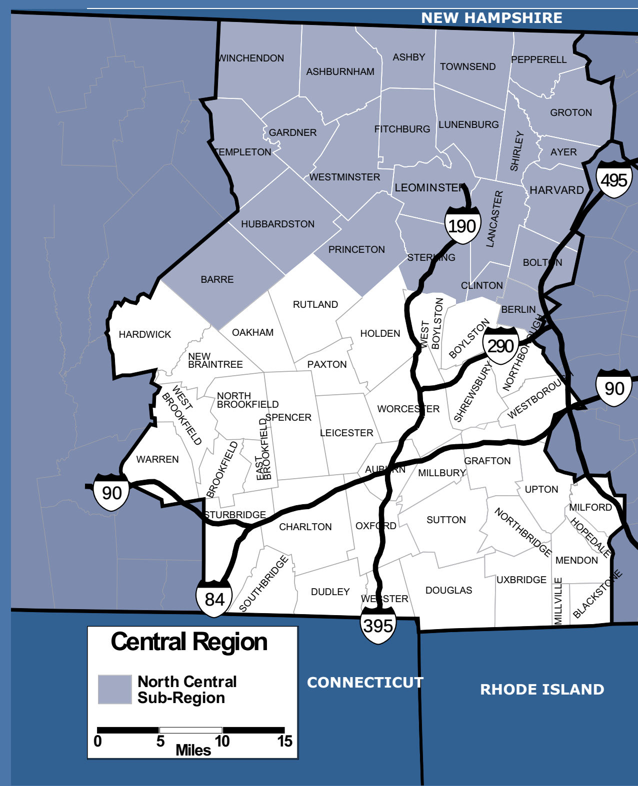
chapter 9

central region





Worcester County lies at the center of Massachusetts and it largely defines the Central Region of the Commonwealth. Economic flows here have traditionally run north and south along the Blackstone River Valley – a natural link connecting the city of Worcester to Providence, Rhode Island. The Providence and Worcester Railroad runs through the valley and ties these two urban centers together. So does Route 146, a newly-expanded north-south highway. Both Providence and Worcester have their own airports, with T.F. Green in Providence providing an alternative to Boston's Logan International Airport for domestic flights. The development of new knowledge-based industries over the past decade, however, has enhanced the Region's ties to the east, and especially to the Greater Boston economy.

Central Massachusetts is commonly divided into three distinct sub-regions running from north to south: North- Central [1], Metro Worcester,[2] and the Blackstone Valley [3].

- The North-Central has the highest concentration of manufacturing employment in the Region. It is home to a large number of plastics and furniture manufacturers, primarily based in Fitchburg, Leominster, and Gardner. For a description of the sub-region's plastics industry, see Chapter 2.[4]

- At the center of the Region lies Worcester, New England's third largest city. Through the nineteenth century, rivers, then steam powered industrial mills were key to the city's economy. While manufacturing remains important, the Worcester metro area has become the region's trade and service center. The biotechnology industry has also taken hold, offering a significant opportunity for long-term growth.

- The Blackstone Valley was the initial home of the nation's industrial revolution and the sub-region, like the North Central, retains a significant manufacturing orientation. Route 146, a newly-expanded highway from Worcester and Providence, has already begun to effect development in the sub-region, becoming a significant conduit for travel and trade both within the Region and across state lines.

While data at the sub-regional level of analysis are limited, figure 9-1 indicates the industry structure of the three sub-regions of Central Massachusetts.

There is little evidence of significant economic exchange between Central Massachusetts and regions to the west. The Quabbin Reservoir, the Commonwealth's chief source of drinking water, runs north and south along the Region's western border and blocks development into the Pioneer Valley. On its eastern fringe, however, the I-495 corridor has grown substantially in recent years, bringing companies and people to towns like Westborough and Northborough. The fringe of the Boston economy is now on the doorstep of central Massachusetts, and the Region is feeling the effects of this development.

Economic Overview

Employment[6]

Central Massachusetts enjoyed the same economic boom experienced by the State as a whole over the past decade. In 1991, the worst year of the 1990s recession, unemployment in the Region stood at 9.9 percent, higher than the statewide rate of 9.1 percent. Since then, both the State and the Region have seen joblessness steadily decline. The regional unemployment rate in 2001 was 3.7 percent, a few ticks higher than the statewide rate of 3.4 percent. Joblessness in the North Central sub-region was a bit higher still, at 3.9 percent (see figure 9-2).

The number of people employed in the Central Region in 1991 – the low point in the Commonwealth's recent history – was 334,000. Ten years later, the number had increased to a high of 372,000, an 11.4 percent gain (see figure 9-3). Data for the North-Central sub-region indicate a similar pace of workforce and employment growth. Employment in the State as a whole rose a bit faster, rising 12.4 percent.

Income

Figure 9-4 (on the following page) shows that average real wages rose at a slower pace than the State as a whole. Wage growth in the North Central sub-region lagged further still.[7] In 1999, the sub-region's average real wage was $30,807, an increase of 4.5 percent over 1990 levels. During the same period, real average wages for the Region increased 10.3 percent, to $33,840. In Massachusetts, real average wages increased 17.4 percent, to $40,127. The Central Region and the North-Central sub-region enjoyed rising real wages during the '90s boom but that growth lagged the rest of the State.

figure 9–1

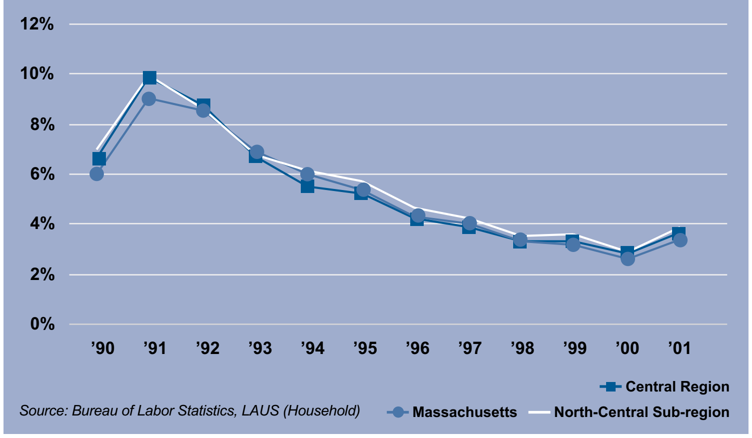
Central Region Employment by Major Sub-Division and Sub-region, 1999

	Central Region		North Central		Blackstone Valley		Metro Worcester	
	Employment	% of Total	Employment	% of Total	Employment	% of Total	Employment	% of Total
Government	47,124	14.8	14,398	17.4	3,997	18.2	28,729	13.4
Agriculture	2,345	0.7	905	1.1	282	1.3	1,158	0.5
Construction	11,540	3.6	3,105	3.8	1,555	7.1	6,880	3.2
Manufacturing	60,138	18.9	20,789	25.2	4,525	20.5	34,824	16.3
TCPU	13,372	4.2	3,114	3.8	1,024	4.7	9,234	4.3
Trade	73,457	23.1	18,435	22.3	4,816	21.9	50,206	23.5
FIRE	17,196	5.4	2,092	2.5	652	3.0	14,452	6.8
Services	92,929	29.2	19,678	23.8	5,079	23.1	68,172	31.9
Total Employment	**318,366**	**100.0**	**82,585**	**100.0**	**22,021**	**100.0**	**213,760**	**100.0**

Source: MA Division of Employment and Training

figure 9–2

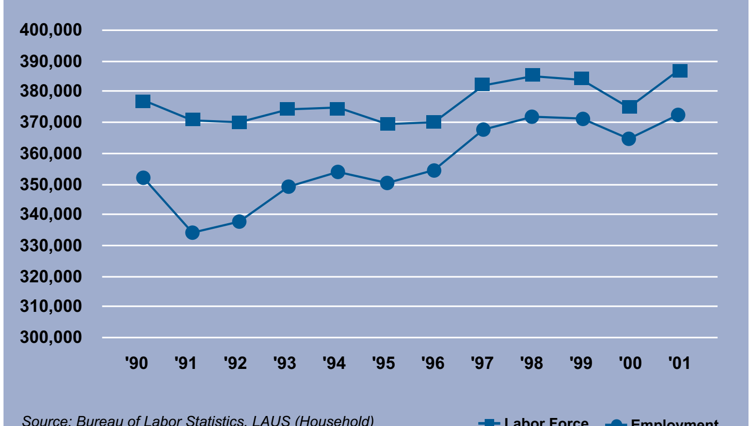
Central Region Unemployment



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, LAUS (Household)

figure 9–3

Central Region Labor Force and Employment



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, LAUS (Household)

---

1 North Central Communities include: Ashburnham, Ashby, Ayer, Barre, Berlin, Bolton, Clinton, Fitchburg, Gardner, Groton, Harvard, Hubbardston, Lancaster, Leominster, Lunenburg, Pepperell, Princeton, Shirley, Sterling, Templeton, Townsend, Westminster and Winchendon.

2 Metro Worcester Communities include: Auburn, Boylston, Brookfield, Charlton, Dudley, East Brookfield, Hardwick, Holden, Leicester, Milford, New Braintree, North Brookfield, Northborough, Oakham, Oxford, Paxton, Rutland, Shrewsbury, Southbridge, Spencer, Sturbridge, Warren, Webster, West Boylston, West Brookfield, Westborough and Worcester.

3 Blackstone Valley Communities include: Blackstone, Douglas, Grafton, Hopedale, Mendon, Millbury, Millville, Northbridge, Sutton, Upton and Uxbridge.

4 A detailed sub-Regional economic analysis is only possible for the North-Central sub-Region. Public economic data at the sub-Regional level of analysis are limited. This is primarily due to the need to preserve employer confidentiality and because sub-Regional boundaries recognizable by Central Massachusetts residents do not always correspond to sub-Regional employment data tracked by the Massachusetts Division of Employment and Training.

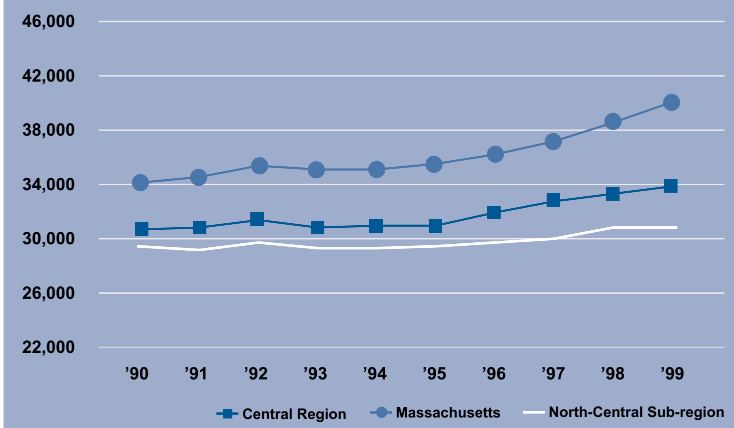
5 Ibid.

6 The data in this section on the number of people employed, in the labor force, and unemployed are taken from the household survey. They therefore will not match the employer-based data used in other sections that report the number of payroll jobs.

7 The U.S. consumer price index (CPI) was used to adjust nominal wages for the effects of inflation..

figure 9–4

Central Region Average Real Wages



Source: MA Division of Employment and Training, ES-202

figure 9–5

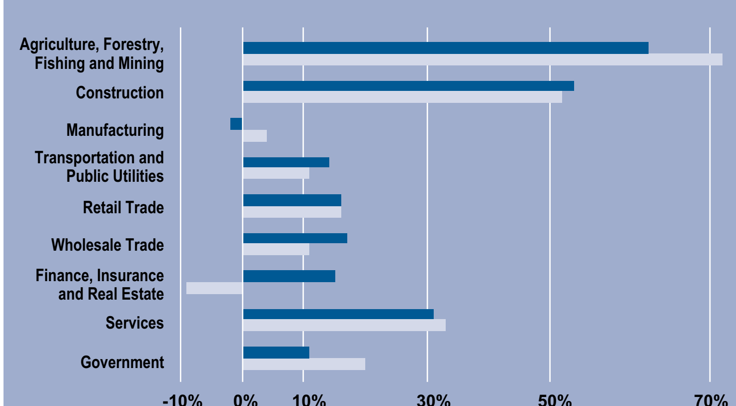
Central Region Employment by Major Division

	1993	2000	Percent of 2000 Total
Agriculture, Forestry Fishing, and Mining	1,776	2,782	0.8
Construction	9,794	14,856	4.5
Manufacturing	60,445	62,617	18.9
Transportation and Public Utilities	15,527	17,203	5.2
Retail Trade	49,916	57,746	17.4
Wholesale Trade	15,731	17,443	5.3
Government	11,809	14,221	4.3
Finance Insurance and Real Estate	17,586	15,986	4.8
Services	97,278	129,060	38.9
Total	**279,862**	**331,914**	**100.0**

Source: Division of Employment and Training, ES-202

figure 9–6

Central Region, Change in Employment, 1993 to 2000



Source: MA Division of Employment and Training

Employment by Major Industry Sector

While the Central Region gained 38,099 jobs between 1991 and 2001,[8] not every industry sector grew at the same pace. Figures 9-5 and 9-6 provide data on employment shifts by major industry sector between 1993 and 2000. Construction employment grew rapidly in the Region, as in the State, due to an upturn in homebuilding and in the development of commercial sites. Manufacturing, the Region's second-largest sector and at one time its economic foundation, rebounded with a 4 percent gain in employment, even while the sector declined by 2 percent in the State overall. The finance, insurance, and real estate sector actually lost 1,600 jobs, shrinking by 9 percent. Over 60 percent of the Region's net employment gain came in services, and the sector accounted for more than three out of every eight jobs by the year 2000.

Every major industry sector in the Central Region experienced an increase in average real pay between 1993 and 2000. The gains in transportation and public utilities, retail trade, mining, manufacturing, and government actually exceeded the growth rates for those sectors in the State. However, real average wages grew more slowly in several sectors, including construction, transportation and public utilities, wholesale trade, and finance, insurance and real estate (FIRE) (see figure 9-7). The net effect of these different growth trends was slower real average wage growth in the Region than in the State as a whole.

However, two important sectors posted solid wage gains. Manufacturing enjoyed a large increase in average pay, rising 25 percent over the period, from $45,722 to $57,343 (2000 dollars). Though the number of employees in the finance, insurance, and real estate sector dropped, average pay in the sector increased 18 percent, rising from $40,481 to $47,964 (2000 dollars).

The Central Region Export Sector

As explained in Chapter 2, a healthy export sector is critical to a region's economic success. The sidebar in that Chapter on "The Massachusetts Export Sector" presented six large industry clusters as the key components of the Commonwealth's export sector. These clusters were identified in earlier State policy documents and studies, specifically *Choosing to Compete* [9] and the more recent *Knowledge Sector Powerhouse*.[10] They include four knowledge-based clusters – Information Technology, Health Care, Financial Services, and Knowledge Creation. They also include two clusters that are less knowledge intensive: Travel and Tourism, and "Traditional Manufacturing" (manufacturing industries, such as paper, plastics and rubber, metalworking, and machinery, which are not part of the Information Technology or Health Care clusters). The discussion below uses this framework to explore the Central Region's export sector.

Figure 9-8 shows export cluster growth in the Region and subregion, as compared to Massachusetts. When interpreting the results of our analysis, please note that the employment figures reported for these large industry clusters are not meant to represent export sector jobs. The health care cluster, for example, includes physicians serving the local population. A finer picture of the composition of the Region's export sector, and the extent to which it has become part of the wider knowledge-based economy, is developed in the discussions that follow. Also, note that some of the following charts show no data for some industries in the export clusters. This does not necessarily mean that the industry is absent. Federal rules prohibit access to data that could provide information about individual firms. The lack of industry data could be due to this limitation.

Knowledge Creation

Employment in this cluster rose by over 30 percent between 1993 and 2000, surpassing the increase in the State overall. This large jump in the knowledge creation sector is due largely to growth in higher education, where employment rose by two-thirds. Research and test services also saw employment expand by more than 60 percent. Management, public relations, advertising, and accounting services and engineering and architectural services also had sharp increases in employment, though less so than the Commonwealth (see figure 9-9).

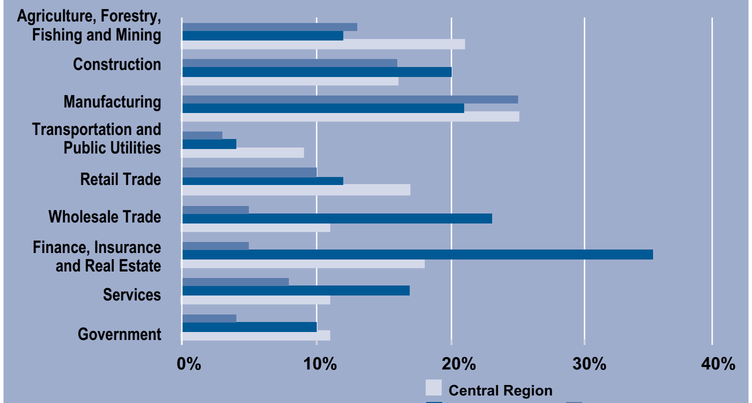
Health Care

Employment in this cluster increased by 9 percent from 1993 to 2000, slightly less than the 10 percent gain statewide. This increase can be attributed to significant growth in health services, which cater primarily to local residents. The Central Region did not experience any discernible increase in the drug and pharmaceutical industry[11] and actually saw a 6 percent contraction in medical instruments manufacturing (see figure 9-10 on next page).

The common wisdom sees the Central Region enjoying continued growth in biotech throughout the 1990s. This is partially true. The number of biotech businesses did increase in number by 37 from 1996 to 2001. Employment, however, fell by nearly 600. The average biotech firm became smaller, with the average number of employees dropping from 44 to 23. Large firms as AstraZeneca in Westborough; Cambridge Biotech Corp. and Neptune Pharmaceuticals in Worcester; and Boston Scientific and Precision Wire, both in Milford, either reduced staff or ceased operations in the Region altogether. The emergence of many small startups did not compensate for these employment losses.

figure 9–7

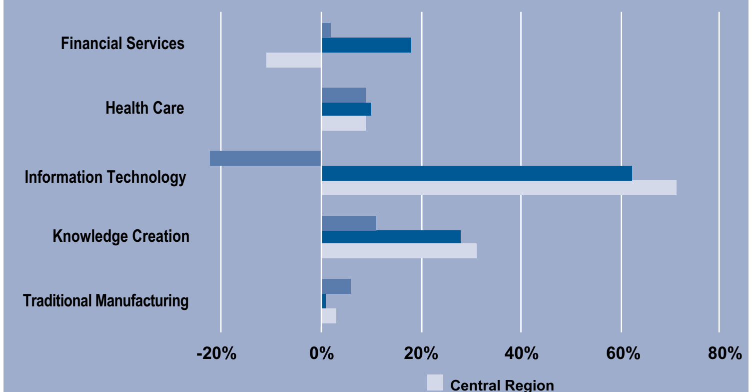
Central Region, Change in Real Average Pay, 1993 to 2000



Source: MA Division of Employment and Training

figure 9–8

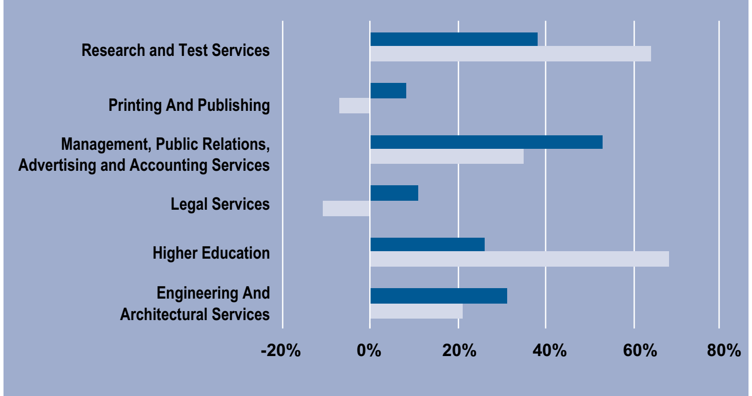
Employment Change in the Commonwealth's Export-Oriented Clusters: The Central Region, 1993 to 2000



Source: MA Division of Employment and Training

figure 9–9

Knowledge Creation Change in Employment, Central Region: 1993 to 2000



Source: MA Division of Employment and Training

---

[8] Employment is measured here using the Bureau of Labor Statistics, ES-202 series, which are employer reports of payroll jobs rather than household-based measures of employed or unemployed people. As a result, the numbers will differ from employment figures based on the household survey presented in other sections of the document.

[9] Massachusetts Executive Office of Economic Affairs and the University of Massachusetts, (Boston: 1993).

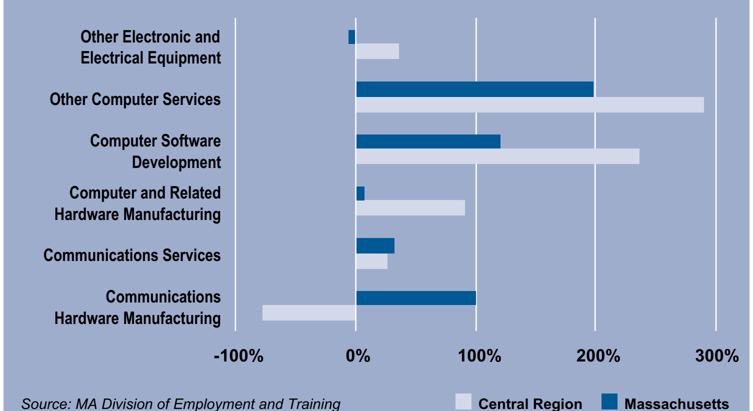
[10] Robert Forrant, Philip Moss, and Chris Tilly, (Boston: UMass Donahue Institute 2001).

[11] The Massachusetts Division of Employment and Training suppressed the data to preserve employer confidentiality.

figure 9–10
Health Care, Change in Employment, Central Region: 1993 to 2000

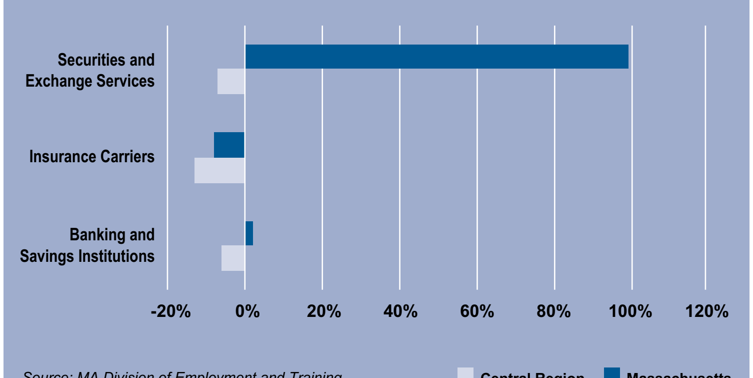
Source: MA Division of Employment and Training

figure 9–11
Information Technology Change in Employment, Central Region: 1993 to 2000



Source: MA Division of Employment and Training

figure 9–12
Financial Services Change in Employment, Central Region: 1993 to 2000



Source: MA Division of Employment and Training

Information Technology

IT employment in Central Massachusetts soared 71 percent from 1993 to 2000, surpassing the statewide gain of 62 percent. This increase is largely attributable to growth in computer software development and other computer services. Employment in software development nearly tripled, while employment in computer services more than doubled. Both subgroups grew much faster in the Region than in the State as a whole (see figure 9-11).

Financial Services

Employment in financial services fell 11 percent from 1993 to 2000, a significant departure from the Commonwealth's 18 percent gain. This decline is largely due to the layoffs at major insurance carriers in the Worcester area – jobs that tend to be export-oriented. Employment in banking and savings institutions also slipped, most likely the result of bank mergers and the subsequent streamlining of staff and resources. Employment even fell in the securities and exchange services sub-sector, which grew spectacularly in the Commonwealth (see figure 9-12).

Traditional Manufacturing

Employment in this cluster, the heart of the Region's traditional export base, grew just three percent between 1993 and 2000. This exceeded the statewide gain of one percent. Employment in apparel and textiles jumped 15 percent, while falling over 30 percent statewide. Employment in machinery increased by 10 percent, although here the State grew faster. Plastics and rubber manufacturing, a regional specialty, grew more quickly in the North-Central sub-region (4 percent) than in the Region as a whole (2 percent), but slightly below the 5 percent statewide rate. Workers in the North Central sub-region rely on jobs in this cluster to keep pace with real average wages in the region (see figure 9-13).

Travel & Tourism

The growing impact of the Travel and Tourism cluster in the Central Region can be seen in the experience of its hotel industry. In fiscal year 2000, hotels and motels in Worcester County grossed an estimated $100 million in room sales, up 36 percent over fiscal year 1997 levels.[12] These expenditures define a conservative estimate of traveler spending. This is because total spending typically includes meals, retail purchases, and attractions, in addition to spending on accommodations.

Between 1997 and 2000, the number of hotels in the county increased 19 percent, to 64. Employment expanded 15 percent, to 2,077 workers. Pay in the industry is low and frequently offers part-time jobs. Yet average real wages increased 21 percent in this three-year period, to $17,284.

---

[12] Estimate based on FY00 State room occupancy tax collections, which are levied at 5.7 percent of the room rate.

Demographics

Population

The Region's population growth exceeded the statewide rate in both the 1980s and 1990s. The population in Central Massachusetts jumped 10.1 percent in the 1980s, twice the pace in the Commonwealth, and by 1990 accounted for 12 percent of the statewide total.

Resident Age Distribution

Shifts in the Region's age distribution echo State and national trends. As the leading edge of the baby-boom generation approaches retirement, they have expanded the size of the 45 to 64 age group by nearly one-third from 1990 to 2000. Other significant changes, also seen across the State and nation, are a sharp decline in the 19-24 age group and a nearly 11 percent rise in the population under 18 (see figure 9-14). Given these trends, the retention of the Region's younger residents is essential to ensuring the availability of workers to support future economic growth.

The Central Region's population is approximately 89.7 percent White, 2.8 percent Black, and 2.6 percent Asian. While all groups grew in the 1990s, the number of Black residents increased by over 30 percent, more than twice the 14 percent rise in the State overall. The Asian population also increased dramatically, but the Region's 69 percent increase closely mirrors the State's 66 percent gain. The share of the population that is White has thus declined somewhat since 1990 (see figure 9-14). The Region's Hispanic population also grew rapidly, expanding by more than half. In 1990, Hispanics were 4.6 percent of its population; their share grew to 6.7 percent in 2000.[13]

Housing

About 61 percent of the housing units in the Central Region were owner-occupied in 2000. Thirty-four percent were renter-occupied and the remaining 5 percent were unoccupied, seasonal, recreational, or occasional-use. This represents no significant departure from the 1990 distribution. It is worth noting that the owner-occupied rate remained stable while statewide it dipped from 59.5 percent to 57.5 percent (see figure 9-15 and 9-16 on page 98).

Regional Strengths and Competitive Advantages

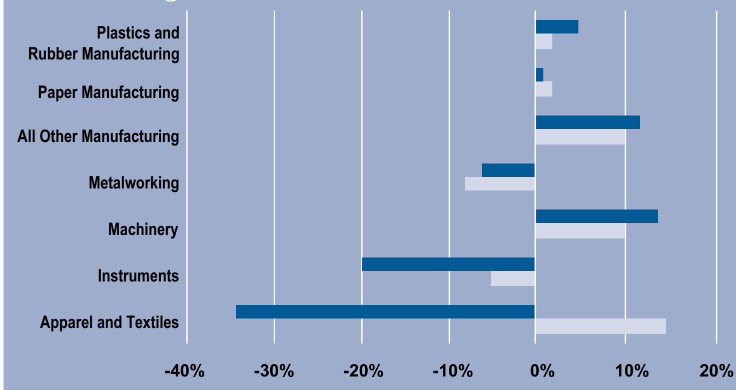
Central Massachusetts is frequently described as the zone of transition, set between the constantly changing economy of Greater Boston to the east and the quiet, steady evolution of Western Massachusetts. The Region indeed has elements that reflect the best of east and west, and which underlie its overall economic performance.

Location. The Region has clear locational advantages in its connections to other parts of the Commonwealth and to gateways to national and global markets. State Route 2 and I-90 (the Massachusetts Turnpike) both provide high-speed access to Boston in the east and to Albany and beyond in the west. I-495 touches the eastern edge of the Region, while Route 146 flows from Providence through the Blackstone Valley. I-190 connects Worcester to Leominster and the edges of Fitchburg. Moreover, I-395 provides quick access to New London. I-84, on the westerly edge, provides quick access to Hartford and beyond. Routes 9, 12 and 122 also provide important inter-regional connections for commuters and commercial users alike. This highway system is joined by freight and commuter rail and easy access to three freight and commercial airports, ensuring that the Region is well connected to both regional and distant markets.

Flexibility. Cities and towns throughout the Region have been actively reaching out to develop new as well as traditional indus-

figure 9–13

Traditional Manufacturing Change in Employment, Central Region: 1993 to 2000



Source: MA Division of Employment and Training

figure 9–14

Central Region Demographic Summary

	Central Region 1990	Central Region 2000	Central Region Change	MA 1990	MA 2000	MA Change
Total population	729,674	773,220	6.0%	6,016,425	6,349,097	5.5%
Age (share of total)						
Under 18	179,305	198,910	10.93%	1,353,075	1,500,064	10.9%
19-24	81,782	64,507	-21.12%	709,099	579,328	-18.3%
25 to 44	243,397	242,126	-0.52%	2,019,217	1,989,783	-1.5%
45 to 64	127,566	168,953	32.44%	1,115,150	1,419,760	27.3%
65 and over	97,624	98,724	1.13%	819,284	860,162	5.0%
Race/Ethnicity (share of total)						
White	684,902	693,245	1.4%	5,405,374	5,367,286	-70.0%
Black	16,299	21,365	31.1%	300,130	343,454	14.4%
Asian	11,763	19,876	69.0%	143,392	238,124	66.1%
Other race	17,710	24,731	39.6%	167,529	254,228	51.8%
Two or more races*	na	14,003	na	na	146,005	na
Hispanic (of any race)	33,635	51,610	53.4%	287,549	428,729	49.1%

* the category of persons with two or more races did not exist in the 1990 Census

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Decennial Population Census

[13] Data describing race and ethnicity must be used with caution. For more information, see the Part II Introduction.

try clusters. This is most evident in its cities, which have been shifting their economic focus to new, knowledge-based industries and from traditional to more flexible manufacturing techniques. Worcester's efforts to expand its highly successful Biotechnology Park and Leominster's efforts to transform its plastics industry illustrate this trend. The Region's smaller towns have also been active; Milford, Bellingham, Westborough, and Shrewsbury are making themselves centers of knowledge-based industries. Blackstone Valley towns are updating their zoning to attract industry suitable to their character. Southbridge and Sturbridge are modernizing their infrastructures and building on the local expansion of the defense sector to stimulate growth.

Labor force. The Region's skilled workforce has been a strong asset. Its blue-collar workers are highly skilled in precision tooling, mold making, fiber optics, and other manufacturing trades. These workers, coupled with the presence of the region's 14 major institutions of higher education, make Central Massachusetts an optimal location for firms that combine research and development with precision production. The Region's workforce has the necessary skills in many trades and occupations and can serve a wide variety of industries. Companies relocating to the Region can expect to draw from a rich pool of educated and well-trained workers. They also have the support networks and just-in-time resources required for seamless operation.

Cost of living. The Region's assets are further enhanced by the quality of life and by housing prices that remain well below those found in Greater Boston. Central Massachusetts has a wide variety of housing, ranging from rentals and older units to modern tract housing. The critical balance between wages and housing costs is also far more favorable here it is than further east.

The Central Region is no longer the Commonwealth's center of traditional manufacturing. Transportation connections, especially along Rt.146 and the Massachusetts Turnpike, have opened new opportunities. Knowledge-based industries, shifting westward from Greater Boston, have increasingly found good locations in the region, spawning edge cities such as Westborough and Milford. The Region's high quality of life and low cost of living are increasingly appealing. These factors, critical to its success in the 1990s, should make Central Massachusetts an attractive place to live and work for years to come.

Challenges to Future Growth

The Central Region is still in flux. As furniture and other traditional manufacturing firms have declined over the past decade, new industries have been launched. On one hand, this turbulence is positive. Modern jobs have increasingly replaced those that no longer make economic sense. This turbulence, however, also creates significant challenges to the region's long-term prosperity.

Unskilled workers. The Region's movement toward a more modern economy has meant that workers with minimal skills are being left behind. The region is also attracting new immigrants with little education and the need for language training. There is a danger of a widening gap in the Central Region: the skilled, educated, and relatively prosperous on one side and the unskilled and uneducated on the other. This skills problem will become more important as three other factors come into play. First, its population is aging, experienced workers are reluctant to change jobs to pursue new opportunities. Second, the Region experienced a dramatic decline in the number of 19- to 24-year-olds who are joining the workforce at the entry level. Finally, the current unemployment rate of about 4 percent, in the midst of a recession, means there are not many workers available for employment. The Region is hard-pressed to meet the labor needs of its employers, and the situation will likely worsen when the recession ends. In short, the region needs to ensure that all its citizens are prepared to meet the workplace opportunities of the future.

Unbalanced growth. Communities on the eastern edge of the Region are becoming increasingly prosperous as they embrace new growth industries. Worcester, Leominster, the Devens District and the Blackstone Valley are also well positioned for growth. However, several Central Region communities, such as Winchendon, Westminster, Templeton, and Athol, have shown little economic advancement. The Center for Advanced Fiberoptic Applications and the Department of Defense Center both hold great potential for in the Southbridge-Sturbridge area, yet more real economic progress has been slow.

Unbalanced growth could lead communities to and to court firms that offer short-term advantages rather than a more promising economic future. For example, mall developers and warehouse owners are eager to find sites along the new intersection of the Massachusetts Turnpike and Rt. 146. For communities hungry for jobs and tax-base expansion, it can be tempting to take the first offer. Given the statewide shortage of industrial land, this might not be the best approach to development in Central Massachusetts.

The Region must also address the indirect impacts of rapid economic development. Devens has grown, EMC expanded, and Cisco Systems has begun construction of its nearby Boxboro campus. This has brought to the region many skilled, high-paid workers, who have increased demand for nice homes, good schools, and a high quality of life. This expansion of knowledge-based ventures brings economic benefits, but also generates costs. It has driven up housing costs and has displaced poorer populations. There is a need to expand the supply of housing in Central Massachusetts for residents in all income ranges. But some communities are limited by regulations and others lack land or infrastructure.

Lack of unification. Towns in the Central Region are organized into a many different planning bodies: the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission, the Metropolitan Area Planning Commission, the Devens Commission, the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission, and even the Franklin County Regional Planning Commission. The Region also has many strong Chambers of Commerce and an active I-495 Initiative Group. Coordinating these various groups has proven challenging. Until such organizations can identify their common interests and pool their resources, it will be difficult to maximize regional planning solutions.

Regional Policy Priorities

Workforce training. The Region must improve relationships among local colleges, community organizations, business groups, and workforce investment boards to better apply its resources to workforce training challenges. These agencies should be held closely accountable for their ability to raise worker skills.

Economic Development Planning. Regional planning agencies, Chambers of Commerce and municipal economic development officials need to work together more effectively. Improved collaboration will be necessary if the Region is to develop a common vision for its future.

Transportation. It is important to complete the Rt. 146 connector to I-290, expand commuter rail service to meet growing demand, address mass transit needs along the eastern edge of the Region, and complete the Fitchburg-Route 2 connector. While Worcester 's regional airport has made substantial progress in recent years, attracting new carriers and destinations is still needed.

Affordable housing. This is increasingly a critical challenge in all areas of Central Massachusetts. This is becoming particularly problematic in eastern half of Worcester County and in the metro Worcester area which, in recent years, has become more attractive to families seeking alternatives to higher housing costs in Greater Boston.

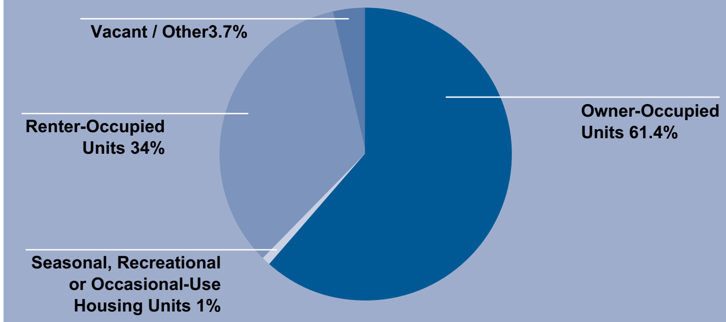
Brownfields revitalization. This Region has extensive brownfields. Redevelopment can help protect community character, improve the environment, and bring these sites back to active economic use.

Linking the Region's Policy Priorities to Potential Solutions

Part 3 provides a variety of policy options that can help address the Region's economic development needs. Figure 9-17 shows where to find relevant options.

figure 9–15

Central Region Housing Supply



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

figure 9–16

Central Region Home Ownership

	1990	2000	Difference
Central Region	61.3%	61.4%	0.1%
% Over/Under State	1.9%	3.9%	2.0%
MA	59.5%	57.5%	-2.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

figure 9-17

Central Region Policy Options for Regional Properties

Policy Priority	See Policy Options, Under Desired Outcomes in Part III
Workforce Training	"Our firms have access to the talent they need to succeed," pg. 123. "Worker skills match the needs of business and the competitive environment," pg. 124. "Firms in our export industry clusters continually innovate to meet high value customer needs most effectively," pg. 119.
Economic Development Planning	"State government provides more coordinated services and resources to businesses, particularly small businesses," pg. 131. "Massachusetts implements housing affordability solutions to support growing businesses and their employees," pg. 129.
Transportation	"Massachusetts is a leader in implementing development strategies that preserve a high quality of life," pg. 128.
Affordable Housing	"Massachusetts implements housing affordability solutions to support growing businesses and their employees," pg. 129.
Brownfields Revitalization	"Our firms have access to the talent they need to succeed," pg. 123 "Massachusetts is a leader in implementing sustainable growth strategies to ensure high quality of life," pg. 128.